

Plastimo: CATIA V5 speeds development, improving turnaround time and innovation



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Bernard Geneau, Product Development Manager, Plastimo*

Overview

- *Hindered by its sluggish and complicated, decade-old CAD tools, Plastimo sought a CAD solution that would support expansion and meet customer expectations*
- *Plastimo selected CATIA V5 to improve its design processes and enable greater integration with boat builders*
- *CATIA V5 allows Plastimo to develop products more quickly, improving turnaround time and customer satisfaction and spurring innovation.*

New CAD system to drive growth and collaboration

Plastimo, the European leader in magnetic compasses, boating safety equipment and life rafts, is the first company in its field to integrate plastic and synthetic composites into parts production. The company relies on its vast line of products and continued innovation as vehicles for growth.

When Plastimo initially invested in CAD tools in 1991, the solutions were sluggish and complicated. Faced with the dissatisfaction of users and a drive to expand, the company decided to completely replace its CAD systems. Plastimo began an 18-month pilot of

new solutions in 2000, testing potential systems on complex designs such as magnetic compass structures.

Because it works so closely with OEM boat builders, Plastimo needed to consider their requirements for product designs in selecting a CAD product, including integration of boat building requirements into the product design process, better integration of the finished product and the ability to analyse the costs involved in product installation in a boat.

CATIA V5 streamlines development and supports innovation

At the conclusion of the 18-month piloting period, Plastimo selected CATIA V5 running on an NT platform as its new CAD system. The company's designers praised the ease of use, intuitive design tools and powerful modelling capabilities of the solution. CATIA's 3D capabilities were quickly being leveraged throughout the company. Production engineers use the solution to produce tooling and the marketing department accesses 3D product definitions, with all the information exchange carried out electronically.

In addition, Plastimo's drawing offices use CATIA to collaborate with the boatyards from the initial steps of a design project to determine an optimised product definition based on style, materials, dimensions and cost. This approach, tested initially with Jeanneau and Bénétteau in France, is new to the field of pleasure boat equipment and depends on the highest level of communication with the OEM.

"It's important to get our products included as original equipment," said Bernard Geneau, Plastimo's Product Development Manager. "Doing so is both an acknowledgement of our product quality, thanks to the customer loyalty we have secured and a guarantee that builders will renew their orders with us when the time comes."

CATIA cuts design time by 50 percent

Plastimo has seen real changes in the way it develops new products thanks to CATIA. The company can now develop products more quickly, improving turnaround time and customer satisfaction.

With its old CAD tools, Plastimo had to conduct one preliminary study for each inquiry. Today, it can offer the customer ten such studies. "We can be more inventive, innovative and even when we present ten studies instead of one, we save up to 50

percent in design time," Geneau said. "We have better control over product development in terms of research, design and production engineering. The use of CATIA right from the research stage is now a pillar of support in the decisions we make."

CATIA brings ideas to fruition quickly

CATIA also has allowed Plastimo to undertake more projects, with a capacity for ten new projects a year instead of its previous three. The company has seen an increase in innovation and product quality and realised shorter idea-to-market times, an optimised product lifecycle and better collaboration among teams.

"What's incredible about CATIA is the ability it gives to progress from an idea to a 3D model in such a short time, not to mention its wealth of applications," said Geneau. "It's a revolution for every user because of the way the tool brings ideas to fruition so quickly. We've changed our whole way of working, and the transition was really fast – it took something like three weeks."

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